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JANUARY 4, 2023 BY RONNIE

Digital Citizen Contribution Program & The Paris Call

It's no secret that very little (if anything) the Canadian Government does actually originates organically from within this country. Typically, some international body or N.G.O. is responsible for setting it in motion. And efforts to combat misinformation online are no exception.

Activities like the Digital Citizen Initiative and Digital Citizen Contribution Program understandably raise questions. In a free and open society, should the Government be attempting to influence and manipulate public opinion on important topics? Why are we paying for this? And does this sort of thing end up doing an end run around democracy? (Not that we really have one)

Is advancing international cyber norms something Ottawa should be involved with? (See original)

All of that said, a more basic question needs to be asked:

Who's really behind it?

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Canada.ca > Democratic Institutions > 05

Paris Call: Trust and security in cyberspace

From:

Backgrounder

In 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron launched the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace with the goal of addressing new cyberspace threats that could endanger citizens and infrastructure. The Paris Call invites all cyberspace actors to work together and encourages states to cooperate internationally with private sector partners, the world of research, and civil society organizations.

Supporters of the Paris Call commit to working together to adopt responsible behaviour and secure cyberspace, based on a set of nine common principles. These principles act as a non-binding declaration and set a precedent as the largest-

Turns out that this stems from a 2018 agreement that received little coverage in the mainstream press. Here is how it's explained on the Paris Call website.

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> Supporters of the Paris Call ***commit to working together to adopt responsible behaviour and secure cyberspace, based on a set of nine common principles***. These principles act as a non-binding declaration and set a precedent as the largest-ever multi-stakeholder cybersecurity agreement in modern history.

> Today, ***over 95 governments, nearly 350 international organizations, as well as more than 600 private sector entities have endorsed the Paris Call for Trust and Security*** in Cyberspace. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly pledged Canada's support for the Paris Call in November 2018.

The media grants to "safeguard democracy" are somewhat known in media and political circles. But what isn't discussed is the international agreement done to make this happen.

Now, were any referendums or election campaigns ever held on joining some initiative like this? No. And it raises the question of who exactly will be setting the standards, enforcing the standards, and what kind of private information that will be shared.

Of course, Microsoft is involved in this project, because, why not?

As with all (or at least, most) agreements, this is considered non-binding. However, Government treats it as if it were a legitimate obligation. Now, what are the ideas behind this?

9 Principles of the Paris Call:

- Protect individuals and infrastructure
- Protect the Internet
- Defend electoral processes
- Defend intellectual property
- Non-proliferation
- Lifecycle security & supply chain security
- Cyber hygiene
- No private hack back
- International Norms

On their own, these principles seem harmless, and in fact beneficial. But with all things, the details of how it would be implemented are worth looking at.

The Paris Call is supported by some 400 N.G.O.s and 700 private corporations, at least, according to recent updates on the site. That of course raises the question of who's just there in a symbolic capacity, and who was actually involved in drafting these documents. They emphasize multi-stakeholder participation at the U.N., without really specifying.

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Canada.ca > Canadian Heritage

Government of Canada reinforces support to organizations to help counter harmful disinformation

From: Canadian Heritage

News release

TORONTO, March 16, 2022

As the pandemic continues into its third year and the Russian invasion of Ukraine now threatens democracies around the world, we need to do more to counter the growing spread of harmful misinformation and disinformation. Today, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage, announced the launch of a special, targeted call for proposals totalling $2.5 million to fund initiatives that help people identify misinformation and disinformation online.

Here, the Government uses taxpayer money to "combat harmful disinformation". Now, it doesn't (yet) call for the banning of certain viewpoints, but it does mean subsidizing and financing favourable ones.

This has led to the Digital Democracy Project and the "Media Literacy Week", among other initiatives. The Federal Government is using taxpayer money to domestically implement an international agreement for cyberspace security.

Français

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Canada.ca > Culture, history and sport > Arts and media > Online disinformation

Digital Citizen Contribution Program

From: Canadian Heritage

The Digital Citizen Contribution Program supports the priorities of the Digital Citizen Initiative by providing time-limited financial assistance for research and citizen-focused activities. The Program aims to support democracy and social inclusion in Canada by enhancing and/or supporting efforts to counter online disinformation and other online harms and threats.

To be added to our distribution list and receive notification when the next call for proposals is launched please send us an email.

Guides and help

- Guide on the public acknowledgement of financial support – Canadian Heritage
- Service standards for Canadian Heritage funding programs

The Digital Citizen Contribution Program was an initiative to hand out fairly large sums of money to “media influencers” that could potentially sway public opinion on a number of different topics.

The amounts and recipients of earlier grants were previously covered here. That addressed the DCCP, but was not exhaustive of these programs.

This seems like rebranded efforts such as Internet Governance Forum and the Digital Cooperation. Both of which were heavily influenced by the United Nations.

> Special Ukraine Crisis Call
> In the light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, this ***special call is aimed to address the growing spread of harmful misinformation and disinformation***. The special targeted call was launched to fund initiatives that help people identify misinformation and disinformation online.

Yes, the Feds actually had a program to contract out influential people that could manipulate public opinion on the Ukraine-Russia situation. Is war propaganda ethical at all?

It’s not a stretch to see politicians go to the next level, and start banning or restricting viewpoints that contradict official narratives. It’s been talked out before.

One final point: let’s not pretend that this is limited to Trudeau or the Liberals. Had Stephen Harper been re-elected in 2015, he surely would have signed onto it.

(1) https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-disinformation/digital-citizen-contribution-program.html
(2) https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2022/03/government-of-canada-reinforces-support-to-organizations-to-help-counter-harmful-disinformation.html
(3) https://www.canada.ca/en/democratic-institutions/news/2020/05/paris-call-trust-and-security-in-cyberspace.html
(4) https://pariscall.international/en/
(5) https://pariscall.international/en/principles
(6) https://pariscall.international/assets/files/10-11-WG3-Multistakeholder-participation-at-the-UN-The-need-for-greater-inclusivity-in-the-UN-dialogues-on-cybersecurity.pdf
(7) https://pariscall.international/assets/files/WG4-Final-Report-101121.pdf

(8) Paris Call Advancing International Norms

(9) Paris Call Text

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